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WHERE ARE THE HIGH-SCHOOL BOYS?

ANYONE whose duties give frequent opportunity for high-school visitation cannot fail to be struck by the fact that the boys are conspicuously absent in nearly all high-school classes. It is not an infrequent experience to find a good-sized class with not a single boy, while a class with twenty girls and two or three stray and lonesome boys is fairly common. Rare, indeed, is it to find a class where the boys are approximately equal to the girls, and practically impossible to find a class where the boys outnumber the girls. Frequent observations of this sort led the writers to undertake an investigation to determine whether the attendance of boys in the high schools was proportionately decreasing, and if so, what were the causes of such decrease, and what remedies could be suggested.

In the United States, according to the reports of Commissioner Harris, the percentage of boys in our public high schools from 1890 to 1897 is as follows:

Year 1890	-	42.67 per cent.	Year 1894	-	-	40.45 per cent.
" 1891	-	41.27	" 1895	-		41.15
" 1892	-	40.59	" 1896	-	-	41.51
" 1893	-	40.10	" 1897	-		42.36

In these eight years the proportion of attendance has remained about stationary. These reports are not complete enough to justify any very accurate conclusions. It is difficult to get accurate statistics on this subject, covering a wide enough range of years and from adequate distribution of localities, to throw proper light on the subject. A study of the reports of Massachusetts, Michigan, and Iowa, taken as a typical eastern, central, and western state, for the years 1890 to 1897, inclusive, show the percentage of boys in the high school to vary during these years from 38 to 45 per cent., the ratio being a little higher in Massachusetts than in either Michigan or Iowa. The following figures were found for the given years for different cities in different parts of the United States:

PERCENTAGE OF BOYS IN TOTAL HIGH-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF
DIFFERENT CITIES

Boston, 1896	-	48 per cent.	Cleveland, 1898	-	40 per cent.
Philadelphia, 1895	-	43 "	Denver, 1896	-	40 "
Springfield, 1898	-	40 "	Kansas City, 1896	-	36 "
Detroit, 1894	-	41 "	Little Rock, 1896	-	32 "
Cincinnati, 1894	-	43 "	Minneapolis, 1898	-	43 "

For many sections, full sets of reports were not available, and even where they were, this particular feature was frequently not given. The reports of St. Louis and Chicago were available, complete, over a considerable range of years. These reports gave the following statistics:

CITY OF ST. LOUIS

Year 1881	-	27 per cent. boys	Year 1890	-	26 per cent. boys
" 1882	-	25 "	" 1891	-	24 "
" 1883	-	25 "	" 1892	-	24 "
" 1884	-	25 "	" 1893	-	22 "
" 1885	-	24 "	" 1894	-	23 "
" 1886	-	26 "	" 1895	-	27 "
" 1887	-	25 "	" 1896	-	28 "
" 1888	-	23 "	" 1897	-	31 "
" 1889	-	23 "	" 1898	-	33 "

CITY OF CHICAGO.

Year 1881	-	29 per cent. boys	Year 1890 ¹	-	26 per cent. boys
" 1882	-	28 "	" 1891	-	28 "
" 1883	-	28 "	" 1892	-	28 "
" 1884	-	29 "	" 1893	-	28 "
" 1885	-	27 "	" 1894	-	29 "
" 1886	-	25 "	" 1895	-	30 "
" 1887	-	25 "	" 1896	-	29 "
" 1888	-	24 "	" 1897	-	30 "
" 1889	-	23 "	" 1898	-	32 "

If the last table be compared with the preceding figures, it will appear that the attendance of boys is proportionately considerably lower in the large cities than in the country as a whole, whereas the figures for the states of Massachusetts, Michigan, and Iowa gave a proportionate attendance of boys substantially the same as for the whole country, according to the reports of the Bureau of Education. For example, in the year 1896, the

¹ Year of annexation.

percentage for the whole country is 41.51, for St. Louis, 28, and for Chicago, 29. Figures are at hand, also, to indicate, if not to prove, that the proportionate attendance of boys is much less in the last year than in the first year of the high school—a conclusion which most observers would justify. Here are the figures:

Boston,	1896	-	First Year H. S.	47 per cent.	Fourth Year	30 per cent.
Chicago,	1897	-	"	" 34	"	22
"	1898	-	"	" 37	"	22
St. Louis,	1894	-	"	" 30	"	18
"	1895	-	"	" 37	"	17
"	1896	-	"	" 37	"	19
"	1897	-	"	" 35	"	20
"	1898	-	"	" 36	"	28

These statistics, incomplete as they were (and it seemed impossible to make them more complete, for reasons already suggested), justify the impression that high schools are in danger of losing their coeducational character and becoming exclusively female seminaries. That such a result was undesirable seemed beyond question. In order to ascertain, if possible, the general attitude of the educational public toward this question, a question blank was prepared and sent to the superintendents or high-school principals of all the large cities of the United States. The following questions were proposed:

1. Are social and industrial conditions such that there is less need of high-school education for boys than for girls?
2. Would separate schools for boys and girls tend to increase the attendance of boys?
3. What changes would you advise in the present high-school system to draw and hold the boys?
4. Would you advise the introduction of more manual training into high schools?
5. Would you favor the introduction of commercial high schools to draw the boys?
6. Would more male teachers in the grades and high schools tend to increase the number of boys in attendance?
7. Would the introduction of algebra and Latin or German into the seventh and eighth grades, by stimulating the pupils' interest and accustoming them gradually to high-school methods, tend to bridge over the gap between the grammar school and the high school, and so to increase high-school attendance?
8. Kindly give any further suggestions that occur to you.

The answers to these questions are tabulated as follows :

Number of question	Auswer—yes	Answer—no	In doubt	Not answering
Question - - - 1	1	47	none	few
Question - - - 2	6	38	few	few
Question - - - 3	Cannot be	tabulated.	All advise	some change
Question - - - 4	36	6	none	few
Question - - - 5	34	11	few	none
Question - - - 6	33	10	many	none
Question - - - 7	21	20	few	few
Question - - - 8	Cannot be	tabulated.		many

Taking up the questions in order some of the answers will now be given in full.

1. Are social and industrial conditions such that there is less need of high-school education for boys than girls?

All but one answered this in negative, some very emphatically. Some thought that there was a greater need of high-school education for boys than girls.

One writes : "In this age of keen competition every boy should have at least a high-school education." Another : "No; but boys can get work without education, while girls cannot, except at service they will not accept." Another : "I believe high-school trained boys are needed as well as similarly trained girls. Common-school positions open to girls give them an advantage." Another : "Most boys know they must become bread-winners, therefore seek employment early in life, and more avenues are open to them." Another : "The competition of women and girls in clerical work throws the boys into manual labor."

2. Would separate schools for boys and girls tend to increase the attendance of boys?

There was a difference of opinion here; the majority, however, favoring coeducation. Some thought separate schools would decrease attendance of boys; one "that it would do in the East but not in the West."

One favoring separate schools writes : "School programs at present are an unsatisfactory compromise between the demands of two sexes." Another : "We have separate schools for boys and girls throughout whole school course. Senior class this year, 52 girls, 47 boys. Another : "I believe in separate schools. We have them; but the attendance of girls is greater; the reason lies deeper than this."

Answers to question No. 3 will be taken up with No. 8 as they naturally go together.

4. Would you advise the introduction of more manual training in schools?

Nearly all were in favor of manual training in separate schools, where practicable, and as courses in regular high schools where not.

One writes: "Some boys are reached only in this way." The principal of an English high and manual-training school writes: "Fully 50 per cent of boys in this school would not attend were it not for manual training." One who opposes manual training writes: "No. We have a very good manual-training course in connection with our high school. The tendency is to devote too much time to manual training."

5. Would you favor the introduction of commercial high schools to draw the boys?

The majority favored this plan but preferred commercial courses in the regular high schools to separate commercial high schools.

One writes: "Yes. We have tried it, both with, and without, and know whereof we speak." Another: "Give us commercial education that trains for business." Another: "We have done this and it has decidedly increased the attendance, without detracting from other departments of the high school." Another: "With a properly organized curriculum, and manned by college men of as good ability as the best in regular high school, yes."

6. Would more male teachers in the grades and high school tend to increase the number of boys in attendance?

While the larger number were in favor of this plan many were in doubt. Most of those who favored the plan said we must have good male teachers if a change is made.

One writes: "In grades, no. In high school at least as many male as female teachers." Another: "Yes. If first-class male teachers." Another: "In my opinion the most potent cause of lack of attendance of boys in high schools is lack of male teachers in grammar grades." Another: "I would put more male teachers in the high school. Boys, I think, prefer male teachers, but *good teachers* are always the first desideratum. It is useless to talk about more men teachers in the average grammar school. The fact is there is no city I know anything about that is willing to pay large enough salaries to induce strong men to teach in the grades for any length of time."

7. Would the introduction of algebra and Latin or German into the seventh and eighth grades, by stimulating the pupils' interest and accustoming them gradually to high-school methods, tend to bridge over the gap between grammar and high schools, and so increase high-school attendance?

To this question the answers were about equally divided. Some had not yet formed an opinion, others thought that it would crowd out many elementary branches, while still others say if this work were *well* done in grades it would accomplish this end.

One writes: "We have done this and find it is going to do all we expected." And another: "We have tried it and the result has been unsatisfactory. (We tried the algebra and German)." Another: "Algebra would. I would substitute easy science in place of Latin or German." Another: "Three years experience with algebra has been successful in this direction." Another: "Yes, think there should be a six-year high school beginning at seventh grade." Another: "It might encourage a few but it would be at the expense of the many." Another: "If seventh and eighth-grade teachers are able to teach these subjects *well*, it might.

Let us now take up questions three and eight, suggestions not outlined in other questions of methods for drawing and holding the boys.

An Eastern man writes: "A broadening of course, a wide range of electives, a release from the educational methods of the Middle Ages, more rational methods of discipline, closer attention to needs of individual and special consideration of the demands of the adolescent, in general more sense and vitality. The grammar and high school should be brought more closely together. The grammar school needs to be greatly enriched and rendered attractive. Of those who enter the high school the great loss is in the first year, and in my judgment is due largely to the plunge into college methods, which do not belong in the high school. The extension of the grammar-school idea of care of the individual to the extent of seeing that he is properly interested in his high-school course would hold through to graduation very many who drop from lack of sympathy." Another: "There should be installed all through the course, the love for higher education." Another: "Many boys *must* go to work. Many *think* they must. Parents should be aroused by public sentiment to keep the boys in school." Another: "We need a campaign of education on this subject through Mothers' and Fathers' Clubs all over the country." Another: "Too many parents seem to think that but very little education is necessary for a business career. When the parents can be made to see the value of an education they will *make*

their boys go to school." Another: "First put some common sense into education below the high school. The mischief begins as low as the fifth grade. Too many antiquated abstractions are palmed off on the boys. Rational and industrial training in and below the high school will help." Another: "Teachers should mingle more with life and business and know men and conditions; live less in a fool's paradise." Two give this answer: "If eighth grade were in same building with high school and department work done here by high-school teachers much good would come." Another: "Have but one course of study. English. Discourage and finally drop Latin and Greek." Another: "A cadet organization; athletic association, some form of deliberative assembly; placing as much responsibility as possible upon the boys; looking upon and dealing with them as young men will tend to hold them in the high school." Another: "I believe that the present high-school course unfits *every boy* for everything except college. I believe that the course is a positive curse to 95 per cent. of boys who take it. The classical course is an aristocratic idea extended to a democracy yet it has a prestige and thereby detracts in a boy's estimation from the merit of an English course diploma. There should be but one diploma given. If we are to hold the boys the course must be good in English, good in manual training, good in business training. The percentage that will enter professional life is a small fraction. The prestige and glory should be centered around a course that fits for the life of the 99 $\frac{9}{10}$ per cent."

Some suggestions, to use no stronger term, certainly follow from the answers here given. It is obvious, for one thing, that our superintendents and principals are practically unanimous in rejecting the idea that the social and industrial conditions in this country are such that girls need a high-school education more than boys. The American high school is our one unique educational institution, the only new element that we have certainly contributed to the world's educational system. It is the people's college, and yet it is obvious that from this people's college the boys are, for some reason or other, turning away. During most of this century we have been agitating the question of higher education for women. Possibly we have neglected a little to attend to the higher education of boys. Certainly, if we are not to have a comparatively ignorant male proletariat opposed to a female aristocracy, it is time to pause and devise ways and means for getting more of our boys to attend the high school.

It seems to be true that where separate schools for boys and girls have been tried, the attendance of boys is practically equal

to the attendance of girls. The separate school plan, however, has never found favor in the West, and there are grave doubts expressed by many whether it ever will. If our girls continue to outnumber our boys two, three, and four to one, as they do in some cities of the West, then we have the anomaly of schools attended chiefly by girls, though planned exclusively for boys; for it is certainly true that our secondary program of studies, as it has come down to us, is one which was shaped entirely with a view to training boys. A half century ago girls were reluctantly admitted to the existing boys' high schools and academies as the simplest and most inexpensive way of meeting the cry for justice to women in educational advantages. Now we find the girls apparently driving the boys out of these very schools, yet no one has seriously undertaken to consider whether the best program for boys is also necessarily the best program for girls.

It can hardly be doubted that in this practical age the question which our young men are asking is, Will a high-school education pay? Unless it is practical, unless it appears that it will pay, it will seem to them and to their parents much like wasting the best four years of their life to attain this high-school education. We have not yet broken sufficiently with the notion, which one of the writers so strongly expresses, that our high school is intended to fit boys for a profession or for college. We have not realized that it must also fit them for the business of life. This can be done, in the opinion of the majority of our correspondents, by the introduction of strong manual-training courses and ample commercial courses in the existing high schools. Superintendent Nightingale, of Chicago, in one of his late reports says: "There is great need for schools to attract the boys. Chicago should have three manual-training high schools. I am convinced that twelve hundred boys would attend, if these schools were located each in one of the three sides of the city. Philadelphia is just opening a commercial high school with a full four years' course of study. Chicago should have one. There should be a separate school, well located, thoroughly equipped, where commercial geography,

industrial chemistry, history of transportation, economics, modern languages, and other kindred studies may be pursued. Such schools are sure to come, and what should prevent Chicago from being among the first?" From the St. Louis report we take the following: "St. Louis should have a first-class manual-training high school, capable of accommodating fifteen hundred pupils, boys and girls. Our present high-school attendance is abnormally small." Such is the verdict of many others. One writer expresses it thus, "We must not refuse a system because of its utility."

With reference to more male teachers in grades and high schools as a method for holding the boys there is a wide difference of opinion. Nevertheless, this method is being considered by many of our school boards and superintendents. We have one school board in mind that this year put university men, the best they could get, into their seventh and eighth grades, paying them a larger salary than the assistants in the high school. Boys as a rule prefer male teachers, and it is the opinion of many of our best educators that it is better for boys to be under the influence of good, strong men during their last years in the grades, while in the high school they should have at least as many male teachers as female.

There is little doubt as to the importance of bridging over the gap between the grammar and the high school. This has been tried in the way suggested in the questions in many places, and with one exception, so far as the replies were received, with good results. The eighth grade, as now arranged, is little more than a repetition of the seventh, while the seventh repeats very much of the sixth. Boys long for a change. If new subjects were introduced and well taught, all the pupils, boys included, would be more strongly interested in their school work.

To carry out any of these suggestions offered, we must have the coöperation of superintendents, teachers, parents, and school boards. They all mean more work for the teacher and more taxes for the parent. But if better results can be obtained, will not the end attained far outweigh the extra burden? We are training for citizenship. Our boys will soon be voters. The

paramount interest of society demands that they shall be educated voters. To be such we must get them into the high school, and train them for the problems of the future.

F. E. DE YOE

C. H. THURBER